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## **CHAIRMAN BUYER RELEASES INTERIM REPORT ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN THE MILITARY**

Washington, DC - Congressman Steve Buyer, Chairman of the House National Security Subcommittee on Military Forces and Personnel who is leading a bipartisan investigation into the issue of sexual misconduct in the military services, today released an interim report on his findings thus far. The broad report expresses concerns relating to sexual misconduct allegations in the military.

In November 1996, Chairman Buyer and Representatives Tillie Fowler and Jane Harman, were appointed to lead the congressional oversight into allegations of sexual misconduct in the military. The bi-partisan, systematic, and thorough review has led the investigation to military training centers and installations around the world. Visits have been conducted at the Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland; Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri; Hawaii, Korea, Japan, Okinawa; the aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy; and the U.S. Atlantic Fleet in Norfolk, Virginia.

“The complexities and the difficulties of these issues have required extensive involvement from myself and my colleagues, Representatives Fowler and Harman, to truly understand the causes and contributing factors that have led to the events at Aberdeen and other training centers and installations around the world. Our goal is to provide the military with effective solutions upon the conclusion of our efforts. There is no silver bullet to provide a quick solution,” Chairman Buyer said.

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**I N D I A N A ' S     5 T H     D I S T R I C T**

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“The interim report we are releasing today provides insights from the numerous briefings we have received, as well as trips we have made so far. It highlights emerging issues of concern and summarizes actions taken in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1998 to address many of these concerns,” Buyer said.

During a visit to Aberdeen Proving Ground in December and Ft. Leonard Wood in May, Chairman Buyer found that first sergeants and company commanders believe that most sexual misconduct problems occur with people held over from one class to another at those locations. At Ft. Leonard Wood, they found that basic training programs are losing focus on the real issue of basic training—transforming civilians into soldiers. In fact, Buyer said some trainees have complained that basic training is not as rigorous as they had expected it to be.

Chairman Buyer has also found that regarding issues of sexual misconduct, fraternization and sexual harassment, “It seems to be more of a problem with leadership than with the structure of the chain of command. We have found that the chain of command has worked and is working, except when those in the direct chain of command are part of the problem— as was the case at Aberdeen. The command climate can vary greatly and some commanders take preventing sexual misconduct much more seriously than others. As some trainees noted, if members of the chain of command are more visible, they seem more approachable in tough situations—such as reporting sexual misconduct.”

Other problems the report notes are that the drill sergeant trainee ratio at Aberdeen and Ft. Leonard Wood is less than the stated goals; drill sergeants are moved around frequently which impacts negatively on the ability of trainees to develop a trust and confidence in drill sergeants; and the number of chaplains assigned are less than there should be at training centers.

Chairman Buyer said they have more visits to make in the coming months but from previous visits he said drill sergeants, drill sergeants in training and drill sergeant instructors have said that the drill sergeant selection and training process needs to be reformed. They expressed that the drill sergeant selection training process is not rigid enough; that psychological testing is only done for those soldiers who volunteer; and that many soldiers see selection as a drill sergeant to be a career-ending assignment.

In response to many concerns resulting from the investigation, Chairman Buyer included language in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1998, to study the military criminal investigative organizations and urges the Secretary of Defense to take all appropriate steps necessary to ensure that allegations of abuse of authority or sexual misconduct are promptly and thoroughly investigated by each military service.

In addition, the bill seeks reform of military recruiting systems, improvements in medical pre-screening of applicants for military service, improvements in physical fitness of recruits, reform of Army drill sergeant selection and training, and an independent panel to review military basic training. Additional visits for the military sexual misconduct investigation include the Navy, Marine and Air Force basic training centers and possible visits to U.S. military installations in Europe.